

**APPLICATION  
For  
UNITED STATES LETTERS PATENT**

by

NICHOLAS N. NASSIRI

*on the invention entitled*

## **CERTIFIED AND REGISTERED ELECTRONIC MAIL SYSTEM**

**Pages of Specification: 46**

**Pages of Drawing:** 2

**TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:**

BE IT KNOWN THAT I, Nicholas Nassiri, a citizen of the USA,  
has invented a new and useful method and system of performing  
certified and registered electronic mail of which the following  
is a specification:

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10           **BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

11

12           **Field of the Invention**

13       The present invention relates generally to the field of  
14       electronic mail and more specifically it relates to a  
15       method, program and system to independently verify that an  
16       electronic message was sent to the intended recipient and  
17       to provide the original sender of the electronic message  
18       with verification of the time and date that the electronic  
19       message was sent.

20

21           **Parent Case Text**

22       This U.S. patent application claims the priority of U.S.  
23       Provisional Patent Application No. 60/241235 filed on  
24       October 17, 2000 entitled, "Certified and Registered  
25       Electronic Mail System" by the same inventor.

26

27       ///

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1                   **Description of the Prior Art**

2                   It can be appreciated that various methods of verifying the  
3                   delivery of electronic mail have been in use. Typically,  
4                   methods of email verification are comprised of electronic  
5                   mail processing systems that track the path of the  
6                   electronic messages. The Prior Art establishes that the  
7                   tracking of electronic mail in and of itself is not a novel  
8                   idea; however, existing electronic mail solutions fail to  
9                   offer customized delivery verification or verification of  
10                  recipient identity prior to receipt of the electronic  
11                  message, as contemplated by the method and system of the  
12                  present invention.

13                  By way of example, the present invention comprises a method  
14                  and system whereby the sender of an email can have an  
15                  independent authority confirm the time and date that an  
16                  email was delivered to the intended recipient and the time  
17                  and date that an email was received by an intended  
18                  recipient. Too, the present inventive device comprises a  
19                  method and system whereby the sender of an email may  
20                  request the identity of the intended recipient is confirmed  
21                  by an independent authority prior to the intended recipient  
22                  receiving the electronic message.

23                  The prior art discloses United States Letters of Patent  
24                  6,282,565 entitled "Method and apparatus for performing  
25                  enterprise email management" issued to Shaw et al; United  
26                  States Letters of Patent 6,108.688 entitled "System for  
27                  reminding a sender of an email if recipient of the email

1       does not respond by a selected time set by the sender" issued to Nielson; United States Letters of Patent  
2       5,878,230 entitled "System for email messages wherein the  
3       sender designates whether the recipient replies or forwards  
4       to addresses also designated by the sender" issued to  
5       Weber, et al; and United States Letters of Patent 5,694,616  
6       entitled "Method and system for prioritization of email  
7       items by selectively associating priority attribute with at  
8       least one and fewer than all of the recipients" issued to  
9       Johnson, et al.

11  
12       The Shaw patent discloses an "enterprise" email system  
13       which is designed chiefly to process large volumes of email  
14       quickly and efficiently. The enterprise email system  
15       processes incoming email using a set of configurable rules  
16       that examine incoming messages for a specific attribute  
17       state condition and subsequently invoke a configurable  
18       action when the attribute satisfies the condition. The  
19       enterprise email system assigns a mail queue timer when a  
20       message is moved into a mail queue. Each mail queue has a  
21       different mail queue timeout value that specifies the  
22       maximum amount of time that a message may sit idle within a  
23       mail queue. The enterprise email system may automatically  
24       move a message from a mail queue into a mailbox of an  
25       enterprise email system user that subscribed to the mail  
26       queue. If the mail queue timer expires, then the message is  
27       routed to another mail queue or enterprise email user. The  
28

1 Shaw patent does not depict a method and system of  
2 customized email delivery verification or verification of  
3 an email recipient identity prior to receipt of the  
4 electronic message by the recipient from the sender.

5  
6 The Nielson patent discloses a system for warning the  
7 sender of an email message if the message is not received.  
8 The Nielson system permits the sender of a message to  
9 designate whether the sender wishes to be warned in case  
10 the message is not opened by the recipient prior to a time  
11 and date specified by the sender. The sender's system  
12 maintains a database of such messages, and automatically  
13 monitors incoming messages and updates the database as  
14 responses are received from recipients of messages. If a  
15 response is not received from a recipient prior to the  
16 specified date, the system generates a warning message to  
17 the sender. The Nielson patent does not depict a method and  
18 system of customized email delivery verification or  
19 verification of an email recipient identity prior to  
20 receipt of the electronic message by the recipient from the  
21 sender.

22  
23 The Weber patent discloses an electronic mail network, the  
24 electronic mail network further comprises a plurality of  
25 nodes or computer stations that permit an email message  
26 sender to control down stream routing of the message. The  
27 system enables the sender of a message to specify which

1           addresses should automatically be set when a recipient of  
2           the message replies to or forwards the message. The Weber  
3           patent enables the originator of an email distribution to  
4           specify one or more recipients in a reply address field as  
5           the destination whenever the recipient replies to the note.  
6           By way of example, User A sends a note to User B and  
7           designates User C in the reply address field. In the note,  
8           User A asks User B to reply with an answer to User C. User  
9           B reads the note, then selects the reply function. The  
10          system then automatically fills in the reply destination  
11          address field of User C. The Weber patent does not depict a  
12          method and system of customized email delivery verification  
13          or verification of an email recipient identity prior to  
14          receipt of the electronic message by the recipient from the  
15          sender.

16  
17          The Johnson patent discloses a method and system for the  
18          prioritization of the display order of received electronic  
19          email items. In one embodiment, the invention associates a  
20          priority sorting attribute with a first email item, sorts  
21          an in-basket list of email items by any priority sorting  
22          attribute associated with any email item in the in-basket  
23          list, said in-basket list including a listing for the first  
24          email item, and displays at least a portion of the sorted  
25          in-basket list in the sorted order. The priority sorting  
26          attribute may be associated with the first email item by  
27          either the sender or the receiver of the first email item.

28

1 A priority sorting attribute may be associated by the  
2 sender with some but not all of the intended recipients of  
3 the first email item and the priority sorting attribute  
4 will then be associated with the first email item only as  
5 it is sent to those recipients with whom the priority  
6 sorting attribute has been associated. The Johnson patent  
7 does not depict a method and system of customized email  
8 delivery verification or verification of an email recipient  
9 identity prior to receipt of the electronic message by the  
10 recipient from the sender.

11

12 The main problem with conventional methods of email  
13 prioritization systems is that none of the prior art has a  
14 method, system or process whereby the sender of an  
15 electronic message (hereinafter the "Client") can request  
16 that an independent, third-party (hereinafter the  
17 "Processing Unit") re-send an electronic message in order  
18 to establish a secondary, verified, registered and archived  
19 record of the time and date the electronic message was sent  
20 to the recipient.

21

22 Another problem with conventional method of email  
23 prioritization systems is that current methods, systems or  
24 processes do not automatically notify the sender of an  
25 electronic message when the message was sent by the sender,  
26 but rather confirms when the email was received. (i.e., the  
27 equivalent of an electronic "return receipt"). There exists

1           a need, from the standpoint of the message sender, to  
2       ascertain the exact time and date an electronic mail was  
3       sent. In an internet based, e-commerce environment,  
4       numerous contractual arrangements are dependent on  
5       establishing the precise time and date of not only receipt  
6       of an electronic message, but also the time and date that  
7       the message was sent to the intended recipient by the  
8       sender. In the event of dispute resolution, verification of  
9       such delivery information is of critical importance.

10  
11      Another problem with conventional methods of email  
12      prioritization systems is that none of the prior art  
13      discloses a method, system or process whereby the sender or  
14      another authorized party is able to access verified,  
15      archived electronic mail information for future use and in  
16      the event of dispute resolution. There exists a need to  
17      have an independent, neutral authority that can verify the  
18      time and date that an email message was sent to the  
19      intended recipient. Likewise, there exists a need whereby  
20      an independent third party can verify the message content,  
21      including attachments, of an electronic message in the  
22      event of dispute resolution.

23  
24      Another problem with conventional method of email  
25      prioritization systems is that none of the prior art  
26      discloses a method, system or process for tracking the time  
27      and date an email was sent that is user friendly.

1           Conventional methods of tracking the time and date of  
2 delivery are beyond the technical ability of many lay  
3 people. The traditional methods of tracking electronic mail  
4 are comprised of complicated, technically laden, messages  
5 or confirmations that are generated internally by the  
6 electronic mail server. Such messages or confirmations are  
7 often beyond the ability of a lay person to access or to  
8 understand, and as such there exists a need for an  
9 independent authority to confirm when the electronic  
10 message was sent.

11  
12          Another problem with conventional methods of email  
13 prioritization systems is there exists no process or method  
14 whereby the sender can send an electronic message to an  
15 independent processing unit to "hold" the electronic  
16 message pending verification of the intended recipient's  
17 identity by the processing unit. Upon confirmation, the  
18 electronic message is released to the recipient and the  
19 sender is notified.

20  
21          Another problem with conventional methods of email  
22 prioritization systems is there exists no process or method  
23 whereby the sender can send an electronic message to a  
24 processing unit that in turn will send the electronic  
25 message on the client's behalf thereby rendering the  
26 client's identity as anonymous.

27  
28          While the devices of the prior art may be suitable for the  
particular purpose to which they address, they are not as

1           suitable for a method, program and system to certify that  
2           an electronic message was sent to the intended recipient  
3           and to provide the sender of the electronic message with  
4           the time and date that the electronic message was sent.

5           The present inventive device is distinct from the prior art  
6           because it acts as an independent, verification that the e-  
7           mail was sent; said confirmation is achieved by the  
8           invention sending the e-mail message on behalf of the  
9           sender, tracking the electronic mail routing, and providing  
10          the client with a digital certificate that verifies the  
11          time and date when the electronic message was sent, and  
12          when it was received.

13          In these respects, the certified and registered electronic  
14          mail method and system according to the present invention,  
15          substantially departs from the conventional concepts and  
16          designs of the prior art, and in so doing provides an  
17          apparatus primarily developed for the purpose of a method,  
18          program and system to verify that an electronic message was  
19          sent to the intended recipient and to provide the sender of  
20          the electronic message with a digital certificate that  
21          independently verifies the time and date that the  
22          electronic message was sent, and if needed, a confirmation  
23          of the intended recipient's identity prior to receipt of  
24          the electronic message.

1           **SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION**

2           In view of the foregoing disadvantages inherent in the  
3           known types of method of email verification now present in  
4           the prior art, the present invention provides a new  
5           certified and registered electronic mail system  
6           construction wherein the same can be utilized for a method,  
7           program and system to verify that an electronic message was  
8           mailed to the intended recipient and to provide the sender  
9           of the electronic message with a digital certificate that  
10          independently verifies the time and date that the  
11          electronic message was sent, and of the intended  
12          recipient's identity, if needed.

13          The general purpose of the present invention, which will be  
14          described subsequently in greater detail, is to provide a  
15          new electronic mail system that has many of the advantages  
16          of the method of email verification mentioned heretofore  
17          and many novel features that result in a new certified and  
18          registered electronic mail system which is not anticipated,  
19          rendered obvious, suggested, or even implied by any of the  
20          prior art method of email verification, either alone or in  
any combination thereof.

21          A secondary purpose is to verify the identity of an  
22          intended electronic mail recipient prior to the intended  
23          recipient's receipt of the electronic mail by an  
24          independent authority.

25          To attain the above identified purposes, the present  
26          invention generally comprises a method, system and process

for receiving and sending, and confirming and registering, electronic mail sent over the internet, computer networks, satellite or other systems that facilitate electronic messaging; and a method, system and process for verifying the identity of an intended recipient of an electronic mail prior to delivery of the electronic message. The latter described method uses a central processing unit to facilitate the receipt and delivery and confirmation of electronic mail, and an infrastructure that facilitates the receipt and delivery and confirmation of electronic mail.

The present invention satisfies a need in the marketplace for users of electronic messaging to utilize an independent authority (the "Processing Unit") to "register" or "certify" electronic mail communications. The present invention satisfies a need in the marketplace for users of electronic messaging to utilize an independent authority (the "Processing Unit") to verify the intended recipient of an electronic mail communication, prior to receiving it. In either instance, the Client interfaces with the Processing Unit by way of a local computer system and the internet to tender a request.

A request for registered or certified mail entails the Processing Unit sending the electronic message, and any attachments thereto, independent of the Client to the intended recipient. The Processing Unit, notifies the Client of when the electronic message was sent, and if requested, when it was received. Notification typically comprises a digital certificate that is emailed to the

1 Client. If requested, the processing Unit retains a copy of  
2 the message contents, including any attachments, for future  
3 reference. In any event, the Processing Unit retains a  
4 record of the time and date the message was sent and when  
5 it was delivered for future reference.

6 A request for identity verification prior to the receipt of  
7 registered or certified mail entails the Processing Unit  
8 contacting the intended recipient prior to sending the  
9 electronic message, and any attachments thereto. The  
10 Processing Unit verifies that the email account to which  
11 the electronic message is to be routed corresponds to the  
12 identity of an intended recipient, prior to sending the  
13 electronic message. Alternatively, the Processing Unit may  
14 hold an electronic message on behalf of the sender, whereby  
15 the intended recipient is verified in person at a service  
16 center maintained by the present invention. Upon  
17 verification of the recipient's identity, the Processing  
18 Unit notifies the Client of when the electronic message was  
19 delivered to the intended recipient. Notification typically  
20 comprises a digital certificate that is emailed to the  
21 Client. If requested, the processing Unit retains a copy of  
22 the message contents, including any attachments, for future  
23 reference. In any event, the Processing Unit retains a  
24 record of the time and date the message was sent and when  
it was delivered for future reference.

25 There has thus been outlined, rather broadly, the more  
26 important features of the invention in order that the  
27 detailed description thereof may be better understood, and

1       in order that the present contribution to the art may be  
2       better appreciated. There are additional features of the  
3       invention that will be described hereinafter.

4       In this respect, before explaining at least one embodiment  
5       of the invention in detail, it is to be understood that the  
6       invention is not limited in its application to the details  
7       of construction and to the arrangements of the components  
8       set forth in the following description or illustrated in  
9       the drawings. The invention is capable of other  
10      embodiments and of being practiced and carried out in  
11      various ways. Also, it is to be understood that the  
12      phraseology and terminology employed herein are for the  
13      purpose of the description and should not be regarded as  
14      limiting.

15      A primary object of the present invention is to provide a  
16      certified and registered electronic mail system that will  
17      overcome the shortcomings of the prior art devices.

18      Another object of the present invention is to provide a  
19      certified and registered electronic mail system that will  
20      notify the sender of an electronic message through an  
21      independent processing unit (i.e., not the equivalent of a  
22      "return receipt" that is generated from the sender's own  
23      email server) that the electronic message was sent to the  
24      recipient and the time and date thereof. Said confirmation  
25      typically will be in the form of a digital certificate that  
26      is archived for future use.

27      Another object of the present invention is to provide a

1 certified and registered electronic mail system that will  
2 allow the sender of an electronic message to forward the  
3 message to an independent processing center that will in  
4 turn deliver the message on behalf of the sender without  
5 identifying the Client. Said Client shall remain anonymous  
6 in this transaction but will receive confirmation of the  
7 time and date the electronic message was sent, typically  
8 in the form of a digital certificate from the Processing  
Unit.

9 Another object of the present invention is to provide a  
10 certified and registered electronic mail system that will  
11 allow the sender of an electronic email to forward the  
12 electronic message to the processing center to hold on  
13 behalf of the sender, pending verification of the intended  
14 recipient's identity. Upon verification of the intended  
15 recipient's identity, the processing center will deliver  
16 the electronic message to the intended recipient and send a  
17 confirmation of the time and date thereof via digital  
18 certificate to the Client.

19 Another object of the present invention is to provide a  
20 certified and registered electronic mail system that will  
21 interface with the patent pending technology as identified  
22 in USPTO customer number 021907.

23 Another object of the present invention is to provide a  
24 certified and registered electronic mail system that  
25 establishes an archive system that stores the records  
26 described herein for future retrieval if necessary.

27 Other objects and advantages of the present invention will  
28

1           become obvious to the reader and it is intended that these  
2           objects and advantages are within the scope of the present  
3           invention. Specifically, with reference to the term  
4           "electronic mail" or "electronic message", the invention is  
5           not limited in any way as to the content contained therein.  
6           "Electronic mail" includes, but is not limited to, text,  
7           audio, visual, video, and digital attachments and any  
8           necessary components thereof.

9           To the accomplishment of the above and related objects,  
10          this invention may be embodied in the form illustrated in  
11          the accompanying drawings, attention being called to the  
12          fact, however, that the drawings are illustrative only, and  
13          that changes may be made in the specific construction  
14          illustrated.

1           **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS**

2  
3           Various other objects, features and attendant advantages of  
4           the present invention will become fully appreciated as the  
5           same becomes better understood when considered in  
6           conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which like  
7           reference characters designate the same or similar parts  
8           throughout the several views, and wherein:

9  
10          FIG.1 is a flowchart that identifies the process of an  
11          electronic mail verification request as described herein.

12  
13          FIG.2 is a flowchart that identifies the process of an  
14          anonymous electronic mail verification request as described  
15          herein.

16  
17  
18          FIG.3 is a flowchart that identifies the process of  
19          identity verification prior to sending an electronic mail  
20          by the method and proscribed criteria as described herein.

1  
2       **DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT**  
3

4       Turning now descriptively to the drawings, in which similar  
5       reference characters denote similar elements throughout the  
6       several views, the attached figures illustrate a certified  
7       and registered electronic mail system, which comprises a  
8       method, system and process for receiving and sending and  
9       registering electronic mail sent over either a computer  
10      network, an intranet, the internet, via satellite or other  
11      systems that facilitate electronic messaging; and a method,  
12      system and process for verifying the identity of an  
13      intended recipient of an electronic mail prior to receipt  
14      of the email.

15      The present invention discloses a system, method and  
16      process to facilitate three primary functions as follow  
17      below.

- 18           (i) **Registered or Certified Email by an independent**  
19           **authority wherein the originator/sender of the**  
20           **electronic mail is identified.** Method one is an  
21           independent verification that an electronic mail  
22           (including all attachments thereto) was sent to the  
23           intended recipient (as identified by the Client) and  
24           the time and date of submission (when the electronic  
25           mail was sent) and the time and date of delivery to  
26           the intended recipient. Verification is a function of  
27           the processing unit who sends the electronic mail  
28           independent of the Client, albeit on behalf of the  
Client, who is identified as the sender/originator of

the electronic message. Upon delivery to the recipient, the Client shall receive a confirmation of the time and date in the form of a digital certificate;

(ii) Registered or Certified Email by an independent authority wherein the originator/sender of the electronic mail is anonymous. Method two is an independent verification that an electronic mail (including all attachments thereto) was sent to the intended recipient (as identified by the Client) and the time and date of submission (when the electronic mail was sent) and the time and date of delivery to the intended recipient. Verification is a function of the processing unit who sends the electronic mail independent of the Client, albeit on behalf of the Client who is not identified. In this instance, the Processing Unit is identified as the sender of the electronic message only. Upon delivery to the recipient, the Client shall receive a confirmation of the time and date in the form of a digital certificate; and

(iii) Registered or Certified Email by an independent authority wherein the originator/sender of the electronic mail requests that the recipient's identity be verified prior to receipt of the electronic mail. Method three is an independent verification of the recipient's identity (as identified by the Client) by an independent authority

1 prior to the recipient receiving the electronic mail.  
2 Per methods one and two above, in this instance, the  
3 independent authority (the processing unit) confirms  
4 the time and date of submission (when the electronic  
5 mail was sent) and the time and date of delivery to  
6 the intended recipient. Verification is a function of  
7 the processing unit who sends the electronic mail  
8 independent of the Client, albeit on behalf of the  
9 Client, who may or may not be identified. Upon  
10 delivery to the recipient, the Client shall receive a  
11 confirmation of the time and date in the form of a  
12 digital certificate, and a confirmation that the  
13 intended recipient's identity was verified before  
receiving the electronic mail from the Client.

14

15 To achieve the above-identified objectives, the present  
16 inventive device utilizes an independent central processing  
17 unit (hereinafter the "Processing Unit") that provides  
18 verification of the aforementioned methods. Broadly  
19 speaking, the Processing Unit email server interacts with  
20 regional email servers and local email servers and with  
21 independent local computer networks. Verification requests  
22 are tendered through a local computer system to the  
processing unit via the local and regional email servers.  
23 The destination data (the intended recipient) for email  
24 communication is acquired from the information described in  
25 email data retrieved from the local email server of the  
26 customer computer system. When destination data subjected  
27 to communication is described in email data retrieved from

1           the email server, the destination data is routed via the  
2           processing unit to the intended electronic mail recipient.

3           Turning descriptively to the drawings, the Client utilizes  
4           the invention in one of three manners as disclosed above.  
5           With reference to FIG 1., a Registered or Certified Email  
6           by an independent authority (the processing unit) is  
7           depicted wherein the originator/sender of the electronic  
8           mail is identified. In this embodiment, the Client (the  
9           sender/originator of the electronic mail) sends the  
10          electronic mail to the intended recipient independently to  
11          the intended recipient. Additionally, the Client sends a  
12          copy of the email either independently, or as a "cc" or  
13          "bcc" to the Processing Unit. The Processing Unit re-sends  
14          the email on the Client's behalf as a registered or  
15          certified electronic email message to the intended  
16          recipient, as identified by the Client.

17          Upon sending the electronic mail to the intended recipient  
18          on behalf of the Client, the Processing Unit sends the  
19          Client a Digital Certificate via electronic mail. The  
20          Digital Certificate confirms the date and time that the  
21          electronic mail was sent to the intended recipient by the  
22          Processing Unit, and the date and time that the electronic  
23          mail was received by the intended recipient. The Processing  
24          Unit archives the time and date of submission and delivery  
25          of original email for future reference. If requested, the  
26          Processing Unit archives a copy of the content on the  
27          email, including any attachments thereto, for future  
28          reference.

With reference to the method and system depicted FIG 1., in the preferred embodiment, the Client accesses a website on the World-Wide-Web ("WWW") that is a function of the Processing Unit. The website provides information regarding the services available and the means by which the Client shall be granted access to the present invention. The website provides information regarding the how to utilize the present invention and the means by which the Client's remote computer shall register and submit information to the Processing Unit. The internet and the website thus serve as a point of entrance to the inventive device and the means through which the Client may submit a request for registered email or identity verification. The Client may further submit audio, text, visual or video information to the Processing Unit via the website from the Client's remote computer system.

The Client must register with the Processing Unit to use the service of its choice. The Processing Unit assigns an identification number or code and a password that corresponds to the registration account for future use by the Client and for the tracking of service requests. Upon registration, the Client may submit a registered or certified email request. By way of example, the Client submits a request to send an electronic message containing an attachment in the form of a word document to a designated recipient, via the website and using the Client's local computers system. The Client selects the appropriate service by way of a pull down menu on the website with the available options: registered mail,

1 certified mail, return receipt mail, delivery confirmation,  
2 submission confirmation, identity verification, and the  
3 like. The Client submits the message, and any attachments  
4 thereto, along with the following information: the Client's  
5 account information, the Client's name, the Client's email  
6 address, the recipient's name, the recipient's email  
7 address, the service or services selected, the date the  
8 email message is to be sent on behalf of the Client, and  
any special requests or instructions.

9  
10 The Processing Unit keeps an internal record of the account  
11 request and a copy of the email content (if requested). The  
12 Processing Unit submits the electronic message to the  
13 intended recipient, as identified by the Client in the  
14 registration account, and tracks the submission and  
15 delivery cycle of the electronic message. The electronic  
16 message clearly indicates that the Client is the originator  
17 of the email and that the Processing Unit is an independent  
18 authority for registered mail or certified mail  
19 confirmation. Upon delivery of the electronic message, the  
20 Processing Unit sends the Client a "Confirmation Record",  
21 typically in the form of a digital certificate, of the time  
22 and date of the submission and of the delivery of the  
23 electronic message. In the event the email message was  
24 undeliverable, the Confirmation Record will indicate the  
25 attempted delivery time and date. The processing Unit  
archives the Digital Certificate and the corresponding  
account information for future use and retrieval.

26  
27 With reference to FIG.2, the Processing Unit does not send

1                   the electronic mail to the intended recipient on behalf of  
2                   the Client, even though the Client is the originator of the  
3                   electronic message. Per the method depicted in FIG.1, the  
4                   Client accesses the inventive device via the website,  
5                   establishes a registration account which is assigned an  
6                   account name and corresponding code or password by the  
7                   Processing Unit for internal tracking purposes. The Client  
8                   submits the electronic message, and any attachments  
9                   thereto, along with the following information: the Client's  
10                  account information, the Client's name, the Client's email  
11                  address, the recipient's name, the recipient's email  
12                  address, the service or services selected, the date the  
13                  email message is to be sent on behalf of the Client, and  
14                  any special requests or instructions.  
15

16                  The Processing Unit keeps an internal record of the account  
17                  request and a copy of the email content (if requested). The  
18                  Processing Unit submits the electronic message to the  
19                  intended recipient, as identified by the Client in the  
20                  registration account, and tracks the submission and  
21                  delivery cycle of the electronic message. In this  
22                  embodiment of the present invention, The Client remains  
23                  anonymous and the Processing Unit is identified as the  
24                  sender. The recipient is notified by the Processing Unit  
25                  that the Processing Unit is acting as a delivery vehicle  
26                  for an anonymous identity, and that the originator of the  
27                  message will be notified of the delivery to the recipient.  
28                  Should the recipient elect, recipient has the option of  
                        posting a reply for the originator of the electronic  
                        message with the Processing Unit. Upon delivery of the

1 anonymous electronic message, the Processing Unit sends the  
2 Client a "Confirmation Record", typically in the form of a  
3 digital certificate, of the time and date of the submission  
4 and of the delivery of the electronic message. If the  
5 recipient posted a reply for the originator with the  
6 Processing Unit, the reply will be contained in the  
7 Confirmation Record as well. In the event the email message  
8 was undeliverable, the Confirmation Record will indicate  
9 the attempted delivery time and date. The Processing Unit  
10 archives the Digital Certificate and the corresponding  
account information for future use and retrieval.

11 With reference to FIG.3, the Client may request to have the  
12 identity of the intended recipient confirmed prior to the  
13 recipient receiving the electronic mail. Per the method  
14 depicted in FIG.1, the Client must register with the  
15 Processing Unit to use the service of its choice on the  
16 website. The Processing Unit assigns an identification  
17 number or code and a password that corresponds to the  
18 registration account for future use by the Client and for  
19 the tracking of service requests. Upon registration, the  
20 Client may submit an identity verification request, along  
21 with a registered or certified email request, should the  
22 Client require both services.

23 The Client selects the appropriate service by way of a pull  
24 down menu on the website with the available options:  
25 registered mail, certified mail, return receipt mail,  
26 delivery confirmation, submission confirmation, and the  
27 like, along with a request for Identity Verification.

28

1 Identity shall be established by criteria selected by the  
2 sender using a pull down menu on the website. The  
3 recipient's identity may be verified by:

- 4 (i) having the intended recipient using a predetermined  
5 electronic code provided by the Client; or  
6 (ii) having the intended recipient using a predetermined  
7 electronic code provided by the Processing Unit;  
8 (iii) having the intended recipient go to a Processing  
9 Unit service center for an in-person verification  
10 using the intended recipient's personal  
11 identification, including, but not limited to,  
12 personal paperwork such as a birth certificate, a  
13 passport, a driver's license and the like; or  
14 (iv) having the intended recipient provide bio-metric  
15 verification; or  
16 (v) other means whereby the intended recipient utilizes a  
17 predetermined code, a password or other means of  
18 encryption.

19 The function of the identity criteria is to verify the  
20 identity of an intended electronic mail recipient prior to  
21 receiving the electronic mail on behalf of the Client, or  
22 on behalf of the Processing Unit, should the originator of  
23 the email wish to remain anonymous.

24 With further reference to FIG. 3, per the preferred  
25 embodiment, where a request for Identity Verification is  
26 submitted, the Client submits the electronic message, and  
27 any attachments thereto, along with the following

1 information: the Client's account information, the Client's  
2 name, the Client's email address, the recipient's name, the  
3 recipient's email address, the service or services  
4 selected, the date the email message is to be sent on  
5 behalf of the Client, and any special requests or  
instructions.

6

7 The Processing Unit "holds" the electronic mail pending  
8 verification of the recipient's identity per the method or  
9 means specified by the Client in the corresponding account.  
10 The Processing Unit notifies the intended recipient that  
11 the Processing Unit is holding an electronic mail for the  
12 intended recipient pending verification of his/her  
13 identity. The Processing Unit further provides the intended  
14 recipient with instructions on how to satisfy the Identity  
15 Verification request. The intended recipient may be  
16 prompted for a password or code, such as a digital  
17 certificate that may be submitted via electronic mail.  
18 Alternatively, the intended recipient may be required to  
19 provide an in-person verification using personal identity  
20 papers, or biometric information, at a stand-alone service  
center maintained by the present invention.

21

22 The Processing Unit keeps an internal record of the account  
23 request and a copy of the email content (if requested).  
24 Upon personal identity verification, the Processing Unit  
25 submits the electronic message to the intended recipient,  
26 as identified by the Client in the registration account,  
27 and tracks the submission and delivery cycle of the  
electronic message. The electronic message indicates

1           whether the Client is the originator of the email or  
2           whether the Processing Unit is sending the electronic  
3           message on behalf of an anonymous entity. Upon delivery of  
4           the electronic message, the Processing Unit sends the  
5           Client a "Confirmation Record", typically in the form of a  
6           digital certificate, of the time and date of the submission  
7           and of the delivery of the electronic message. The  
8           Confirmation Record further contains the information used  
9           to verify the intended recipient's identity. In the event  
10          the email message was undeliverable, the Confirmation  
11          Record will indicate the attempted delivery time and date.  
12          The processing Unit archives the Digital Certificate and  
13          the corresponding account information for future use and  
14          retrieval.

15         In any of the foregoing embodiments of the present  
16         invention, the Processing Unit utilizes conventional  
17         hardware and software applications. In the preferred  
18         embodiment, the main server will be the host server that  
19         tracks incoming and outgoing electronic messages; that  
20         tracks customer accounts and identities; that archives all  
21         relevant information for future use and/or reference; and  
22         that disseminates the foregoing data to regional/local  
23         servers and clients as necessary. The main server is the  
24         central processing unit that serves to receive client  
25         account information and to facilitate requests for services  
26         and transactions described herein.

27         Said electronic mail processing system is comprised of the  
28         following elements:

- (i) an information storage system that will receive the client's account registration information;
  - (ii) an information storage system that will receive the client's request for certified and registered mail services, and for identity verification services;
  - (iii) an outgoing mail information system that will track the time and date of when the client's electronic message was sent to the intended recipient;
  - (iv) an outgoing mail information system that will track the time and date of when the client's electronic message was delivered to the intended recipient;
  - (v) an information verification storage system that will track notifications sent to the client in the form of a digital certificate that certify the time and date of when the electronic message was sent to the intended recipient;
  - (vi) an identity verification storage system that will track the criteria used to establish identity and the time and date of notifications regarding the same; and
  - (vii) an archive information storage system that will track all verifications for future retrieval by the client if necessary.

The main server structurally serves to store all of the

1 information generated by the invention and its related  
2 processes, systems, and methods. The main server functions  
3 to receive the electronic requests for service from the  
4 Client and disseminate the requests to the appending  
5 infrastructure (the "head office") where the request will  
6 be processed and packaged to allow tracking of the  
electronic mail.

7  
8 The regional server interfaces with the main server. The  
9 regional sever in turn receives the information from the  
main server and disseminate it to the local servers. The  
10 regional server receives the electronic mail package from  
11 the main server and forwards the electronic mail to the  
12 intended local server. The structure and function of the  
13 regional server is to interface with the main server and  
14 provide tracking information of the electronic mail.

15  
16 The local servers will in turn disseminate the electronic  
17 mail and/or information to the intended recipient. The  
18 local server interfaces with the regional server. The local  
server receives the electronic mail package and forwards it  
19 to the intended recipient as identified by the client. The  
20 structure and the function of the local server is to  
21 interface with the regional server and to provide tracking  
22 information of the electronic mail.

23  
24 The interconnections between the servers include any and  
25 all networks and or systems or applications that facilitate  
the sending and receipt of electronic mail, and any and all  
26 infrastructure necessary to facilitate the sending, receipt  
and confirmation of electronic mail. The various processing

systems may also include multiple main frame computers, such as a main frame computer which may be preferably coupled to Local Area Network by means of communications link. Those skilled in the art will appreciate that the main frame computer may be located a great geographic distance from the LAN.

The inventive device is capable of a breadth of applications with respect to certified and electronic mail services. In this vein the following terms, as used herein, shall be construed to have the following meanings:

"Electronic Mail or Email or Electronic Message" are used interchangeably and all denote an electronic message with varied content contained therein. The electronic mail may comprise, but is not limited to, text data, audio data, visual data, video data, electronic data, electronic attachments and any necessary components thereof.

"Registered Email" and "Certified Email" are used interchangeably and denote a variety of services offered by the inventive device. The services may comprise, but are not limited to, registered email, certified email, return receipt email, submission confirmation, delivery confirmation, tracking information and routing information.

"Identity Verification" denotes a variety of services offered by the inventive device. The services may comprise, but are not limited to, verification using digital

certificates, biometric information such as a thumbprint, voiceprint, retinal scan, a graphical, hand written signature, or personal identity papers such as a drivers license, a passport, and the like.

"Client" means an individual or entity that tenders a request for services offered by the present invention. The Client may be identified or may remain anonymous.

"Intended Recipient" means an individual or entity as identified by the Client to receive the electronic message. A single electronic may have more than one intended recipient.

With respect to the above description then, it is deemed readily apparent and obvious to one skilled in the art, that all equivalent relationships to those illustrated in the drawings and described in the specification are intended to be encompassed by the present invention. Therefore, the foregoing is considered as illustrative only of the principles of the invention. Further, since numerous modifications and changes will readily occur to those skilled in the art, it is not desired to limit the invention to the exact construction and operation shown and described, and accordingly, all suitable modifications and equivalents may be resorted to, falling within the scope of the invention.

**I CLAIM:**